

Spilled, difficult to handle material, can be transferred from the spillage location through the use of a deformable absorber member that has a thin surface coating that has a high affinity for the spilled material. The deformable absorber may be provided with a large spilled material receiving surface area through being formed of a group of contacting particles or intertwined filaments that impart a wicking capability with respect to a spillage in liquid form. The invention is of particular use in the cleaning up of spilled mercury droplets using a woven copper wick member coated with a thin layer of gold.